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TO RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5544
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0289
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UNCLAS SOFIA 000721

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OTRA](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR LUKAS KOHLER AND MATHEW HAARSAGER

REF: DTG: 131743Z NOV 08

¶1. Embassy warmly welcomes and grants country clearance for Mr. Lukas Kohler and Mr. Mathew Haarsager, from November 15 - 17, 2008. The purpose of this visit is to hold discussions with Bulgarian financial and government officials. PLEASE NOTE: a Visa is required for official and diplomatic visitors, regardless of length of stay.

¶2. Point of contact for this visit is Kelly Adams-Smith, who may be reached at +359 2 937-5220 office; +359 886-000-266 mobile, e-mail: AdamsSmithKE@state.gov.

¶3. All cleared U.S. citizens on official business, who will be in Bulgaria longer than two weeks, must contact the Regional Security Office at 359-2-937-5316 upon arrival in Bulgaria.

¶4. The U.S. Embassy office building is located at 16 Kozyak Street, 1407 Sofia (in the Lozenets district). The Embassy telephone number is 359-2-937-5100; the general fax number is 359-2-937-5320.

¶5. Per diem for Sofia is USD 151.00 (lodging) and USD 82.00 (M&IE).

¶6. All Department of State issued Global ID (GLID) badges are accepted at Post. If visitor has a GLID badge, they are encouraged to bring it with them to Post, but should be prepared to show additional ID before being allowed on compound.

¶7. Important Travel Information: All U.S. visitors require a valid U.S. passport to enter Bulgaria. Official and diplomatic passports do/do require visas regardless of length of stay. Tourist/tourist passports do not require a visa for visits of less than thirty days. All foreigners entering Bulgaria are required to declare the purpose of their visit and the address where they intend to stay. The declaration card will be issued either on the airplane before arrival, or at the point of entry.

¶8. Computer access at Embassy: If travelers wish to access their State Department e-mail accounts, or work on an embassy computer while in Sofia, they need to know their home office exchange server data and domain name in order to establish a temporary account. With this information, Sofia IPC can initiate an account within a few hours after receiving signed request forms once travelers are in Sofia. Please note: while in Sofia, visitors will not be able to log on, or have access to, State Department systems and/or intranet without establishing their own temporary Sofia account.

¶9. Customs Declaration Requirement: Bulgarian law requires that travelers entering Bulgaria with more than 8,000 Bulgarian leva (around USD 5,000) or the equivalent in foreign currency, travelers checks, gems, gold or silver, must declare the money, checks and/or valuables to customs officials upon arrival. Travelers entering Bulgaria with any amount of cut or uncut gems, un-worked gold or silver, must also declare these valuables. Americans intending to declare money or valuables who enter Bulgaria through Sofia Airport are strongly encouraged to use the red, Something to Declare, line and not the green, Nothing to Declare, line at Customs, even if specifically invited into the green line by a Customs official. The

Bulgarian government considers entry through the green line to be a formal, irrevocable, declaration that the traveler is carrying less than the allowable amount, and Customs authorities have sometimes confiscated travelers' entire funds if they are carrying undeclared cash in excess of the allowed amount. Travelers should also declare jewelry, cameras, computers, and other valuables upon arrival in order to avoid difficulties when departing.

¶10. Electronic devices: Privately owned laptops and personal computers, peripherals, diskettes and tapes are prohibited in the controlled access area (CAA) of the Embassy. Travelers with USG unclassified and classified laptop or notebook computers, peripherals and diskettes and tapes should notify the Regional Security Office before bringing this equipment to post. RSO approval must be obtained before any electronic device may be brought into the CAA. Cellular phones are also prohibited in the CAA and must be left outside this area in one of the lockers. Questions concerning other types of electronic devices and magnetic media may be directed to the RSO.

¶11. Crime and Safety: Sofia currently has a high criminal threat designation, although most crime involving visitors does not involve violence or the threat of violence. Pickpockets are especially prevalent in public places, and auto theft is increasing. Moreover, commercial air travelers should be aware that pilferage of luggage does sometimes occur at Sofia airport. Therefore, no valuable items should be included in checked baggage. Embassy recommends using only OK Taxi Company (937-2121). For more detailed information, please review the Embassy's Crime and Safety Report on the web at www.usembassy.bg. To advise personnel about ways to protect themselves and their valuables while in Bulgaria, the RSO requires that TDY personnel who are staying in Bulgaria longer than two (2) weeks attend a security briefing. The briefing is conducted every

Thursday at 3:00 p.m.

¶12. Payment and Currency: Bulgaria is largely a cash economy. Most shops and restaurants still do not accept travelers' checks and credit cards. For expenses, post strongly recommends obtaining dollars in clean, new bills; old, torn and defaced bills are often not accepted for exchange. Personal checks may be cashed at the embassy cashier. Exchange bureaus provide ready exchange of foreign currency at competitive rates. Money exchange offers by individuals outside exchange offices or banks should be avoided, as they are often a dodge to pass counterfeit currency, or a set-up for robbery. Due to pervasive fraud and theft of card numbers, the use of credit cards (other than at major hotels) or ATM machines (other than the machine located inside the Embassy) is not recommended in Bulgaria. PLEASE NOTE: All visitors staying 30 days or more should view Sofia's TDY policy, which is found at <http://internet.sofia.state.gov/sections/fmo/ICASS.htm>.

¶13. Telephones: Rates for international telephone calls are expensive. A ten-minute call to the United States is approximately USD 40.00. Travelers may prefer U.S. or locally purchased calling cards that offer reduced rates.

¶14. Health care: Medical emergencies can be handled at one or two facilities that are equipped with modern equipment, and the Embassy Health Practitioner can provide routine services for travelers on TDY orders. Travelers should bring an adequate supply of routinely taken medication since these may not be available locally.

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